

The Unheroic Antics of Hero Alom



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WHAT Hero Alom may lack in talent or tact, he more than makes up with his keen instinct for self-merchandising. His "art" is an exercise in mockery, faux aesthetics, and narcissistic self-indulgence. He serves as an agent provocateur of low taste and high cheekiness.

However, he manages to remain in the public eye and continues to be discussed. For a public performer, that outcome is the most coveted reward.

What explains him, and his persistence in the "news"? First, he cloaks himself in the mantle of the common man, a populist counter-point to the dominance of a snobby and incestuous cultural establishment. He has a shrewd understanding of the way "high culture" is presented, commodified and consumed, and the intellectual pretensions and social posturing of the "culture vultures" who are generally perceived as looking down upon others with disdain if not contempt. The alienated "hoi polloi" become his obvious constituency.

Ironically, some of his supposedly "progressive" defenders (demonstrating some rhetorical excess and stretchy logic) who have recently extolled him as a symbol of resistance and subversion against the hegemony of the dominant elite and hence provoking their wrath, fall into the trap of victimhood he has cleverly set for them. He is no more a class hero than Trump is a constitutional scholar, or Modi a spiritual healer.

Second, in his latest venture (improbably, as a Tagore "artiste") he exploits the political polarisation in the country. Rabindranath is a contested presence, lionised and appropriated by people of some

political persuasions, disfavoured and opposed by a few others. Thus, when he is reduced to no more than an amusing figure that can be mangled, distorted, and snickered at, then the second group feels vindicated and emboldened.

Third, he is as much as a product of his times as he is an active agent of its dynamic. The current "social media" environment, given its obsession with cheap humour and immediate gratification, is perfectly suited to his kitschy and tacky interventions, which consist mostly of cheesy videos in which sexism and titillation are more apparent than musical virtue.

Moreover, most public engagements today, which may even include teaching, academic presentations, political protest or national celebrations, have become high theatre, a performance art, a set of attention-grabbing media events which emphasises "chamak" (style, gimmickry, entertainment) rather than substance, merit or value. This is Hero Alom's natural habitat.

There is a different consideration. First, he may be seen as part of a universal fixture located in many periods and cultures. Most villages had an idiot, most courts a jester, most eras a fool, most classes a clown, most Raja Krishnachandras, a Gopal Bha(n)tr. They provided comic relief and necessary distractions, offered pithy advice and folk wisdom, personified the common man. They were innocent, endearing and socially useful.

Fourth, in the West, there is a rich tradition of the comic as social critic (Charlie Chaplin, George Carlin, etc.) leading, more recently, to "outsider" humourists like Sacha Baron Cohen or the late Andy Kaufman.



VISUAL: STAR

They would play different roles as imposters and pranksters (Cohen pretended to be a serious journalist, a politician, or a representative of different cultures, Kaufman acted as an Elvis impersonator, a professional wrestler or political commentator). The roles they caricatured were the "joke" which they inflicted on the public with a straight face. Their buffoonery, such as it was, satirised the fads and foibles of American popular culture with savage glee.

But our Hero lacks the wit, imagination or appetite to be socially relevant. He is hardly an anti-hero, or counter-cultural icon, or a comedic seer of his time. If he had performed the "lungi dance" in front of the Cineplex to register protest at the humiliation of an elderly patron for wearing it, he would have at least garnered some praise for the courage and innovation he had demonstrated.

But, all he cares for, and peddles, is himself. He simply "is", and what there is appears to be rather little. In the words of Gertrude Stein - there is no "there", there.

The latest brouhaha surrounding him, and some support and sympathy he has generated because of it, is not because of anything that he had accomplished, but what was done to him.

He rendered a Tagore composition, in his typically limp style, bad pronunciation, and tonal disarray. Some outrage was entirely expected. But what was flabbergasting and unprecedented is the fact that the police became involved, hauled him to the station, interrogated him for almost eight hours, and forced him to sign a "muchleka" (a bond or guarantee) that he would not sing Tagore or Nazrul songs anymore. As Hamlet would say, "ay, there is the

rub", or as Lady Chatterley's gardener would put it, "what the f...?"

Under what authority can the police make such a demand and compel its acceptance? Since when did they become arbiters of cultural taste? Are they trained in such matters? Will they extend their authority over other cultural productions (poems, plays, dance), or other performers, with the police becoming quality control enforcers sitting in judgment over them? Does the constitution permit this unwarranted and unexpected extension of their jurisdiction? Does the example of other countries serve as a model and justification for this behaviour? Are there historical precedents in our own?

The sheer absurdity, if not the audacity, of the police, reaches Orwellian proportions, and sends chills down the spines of all citizens,

particularly the artistic/cultural/intellectual community.

The police may argue that Tagore is "different". He is located within the cultural and political landscape of the country, integral to its struggles for identity and liberation. Moreover, his musical oeuvre is unique and non-replicable with universal brand-name recognition. Millions identify with his music and are inspired by it. Courses, departments, academies, and even universities are dedicated to ensure that standards of notational accuracy, stylistic integrity, and presentational dignity are consistently maintained. To offer his music in a callous or distorted manner is not merely an example of shabby taste, but an affront to his image, cause, and heritage. It is difficult to tolerate or forgive. Therefore, stopping him is justifiable.

The point is powerful, but irrelevant. Music is a creative process and does not follow or need professional certification protocols. It may be possible, perhaps necessary, to ignore him, condemn him, even mount a campaign against him. But no one can deprive him of his right to sing simply because s/he disapproves of the quality of his voice, his style or musical ability.

In Brandenburg vs. Ohio (1969), the US Supreme Court observed that the accused, a notorious leader of the KKK who had made vile and vicious remarks against Blacks and Jews, was patently stupid in his position and language. But the ruling suggested that he has that right (i.e., to be stupid). The First Amendment does not merely protect nice and acceptable speech, but also opinions and words that some may deem silly, ugly or hateful. Society can (and should) reject him, the laws cannot. The same principle applies to our Hero.

However, he may have the last laugh after all. He can always point out that if he is so bad, why does he have so many followers? And further, why am I wasting my time writing about him? TOUCHE!!!

SIZZLING SUMMER OF 2022

Heat wave, heat dome, wet-bulb temperature



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QUAMRUL HAIDER

THE summer of 2022 has barely reached the mid-point, yet we are staring at another year of bleak climate news. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, summer began early this year with temperatures soaring upward from March. Pakistan already faced five successive heat waves, with Jacobabad registering a scorching 49.5 degrees Celsius at one point in May. And that was before summer officially began on June 21, raising concern among climate scientists that heat waves are arriving much earlier as the planet warms.

Moreover, over a three-day period in July, temperature in Greenland was high enough to melt 18 billion tons of the country's ice sheet, contributing to an increase in the global sea level. A loss of 6 billion tons of ice per day is alarming, especially since the effect of melting is cumulative. This confirms scientists' fear that the worst-felt impacts of heat waves will be in the Arctic region.

The current heat waves sweeping across the northern hemisphere, particularly continental Europe, the UK, Indo-Pak subcontinent and parts of the United States, are forecast to become even more severe as the summer progresses, prompting concerns over infrastructure problems like melting of road surfaces, widespread power outages and warped train tracks, in addition to triggering wild fires, prolonging ongoing droughts and famine, limiting plant and crop growths, and most importantly causing heat-related deaths. Clearly, hotter, longer and more frequent heat waves are an unmistakable sign of climate change.

What is a heat wave?

A heat wave is a period of hot weather with temperatures that remain much hotter than the local average for an extended period of time, lasting several days,

even for weeks. Generally, if the temperature is between 36 and 38 degrees, it is considered as mild heat wave. If it is between 38 and 40 degrees, then the heat wave is considered moderate and if the



temperature is between 40 and 42 degrees, it is considered as intense. When the temperature rises above 42 degrees, it is considered as very intense heat wave.

The Union of Concerned Scientists warns that in the next few decades, if greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow, we could see 20 to 30 more days of heat waves annually. Some parts of the world could be hit even harder, potentially enduring 40 to 50 more such days. Furthermore, heat waves in the coming years will become more frequent and more torrid.

What causes heat waves?

Record heat waves are caused by a heat dome, which is a self-reinforcing, sprawling area of

persistent and strong high-pressure system up in the atmosphere. Just like a lid on a boiling pot that traps steam at high pressure and temperature, the dome traps warm ocean air in the jet stream - a current of air spinning counter clockwise around the globe. As the air sinks and gets compressed, it heats up, pushing temperatures upward. At the same time, the dome, worsened by human-induced climate change, squeezes clouds away, which gives the Sun an

moisture in the air, it is harder for sweat to evaporate off our body and cool us down. A high wet-bulb temperature will create an imbalance between heat loss and heat gain, thereby hampering our body's ability to cool itself down. If we cannot cool down quickly, the body will overheat, thus creating conditions for life-threatening heatstroke.

If the humidity is low but the temperature is high, or vice versa, the wet-bulb temperature probably will not be near our body's tipping

point. But when both the humidity and the temperature are very high, the wet-bulb temperature can go up toward dangerous levels. For example, when the air temperature is 46 degrees and the relative humidity is 30 percent, the wet-bulb temperature is only about 30.5 degrees. However, when the air temperature is 39 degrees and the relative humidity is 77 percent, the wet-bulb temperature is about 35 degrees, which is the absolute limit of human tolerance. Above that, our body will not be able to maintain its constant core temperature of 37 degrees.

As global temperatures rise, air will become warmer and hence will be able to hold more moisture. That, in turn, will increase humidity and cause wet-

bulb temperatures to creep up. During the heat waves that overtook South Asia in May and June of this year, Jacobabad in Pakistan recorded a maximum wet-bulb temperature of 33.6 degrees while Delhi topped that, reaching close to the upper limit of human adaptability to heat and humidity.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the current path of carbon dioxide emissions, exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war, we are not on track to meet targets agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, which stipulated keeping global temperature increase well below 2 degrees, preferably at 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels by the year 2050. Recent scientific studies state that even if we reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero today, we have a five percent chance of keeping warming to 2 degrees, and only one percent chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees. Arguably, heat waves are welcoming us to the future, a one-way road with no turning back in our lifetimes.

unobstructed view of the ground, which then bakes in the sunlight. Consequently, in the long days and short nights of summer, heat energy quickly accumulates and temperatures rise.

What is the hottest temperature the human body can endure?

The answer is straightforward: a wet-bulb temperature of 35 degrees, according to a 2020 study in the journal Science Advances. It is not the same as the ambient air temperature, also known as the dry-bulb temperature. A wet-bulb temperature is measured by a thermometer covered in a water-soaked cloth, and it takes into account both heat and humidity.

The wet-bulb temperature is important because with more

moisture in the air, it is harder for sweat to evaporate off our body and cool us down. A high wet-bulb temperature will create an imbalance between heat loss and heat gain, thereby hampering our body's ability to cool itself down. If we cannot cool down quickly, the body will overheat, thus creating conditions for life-threatening heatstroke.

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ঢাকা মহানগর মহিলা কলেজ
(ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক পরিচালিত)
লক্ষ্মীবাজার, সূত্রাপুর, ঢাকা-১১০০

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ও সরকারি বিধি মোতাবেক ঢাকা মহানগর মহিলা কলেজের নিম্নবর্ণিত পদে নিয়োগের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

পদের নাম	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	বেতন স্কেল
অধ্যক্ষ	স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর পর্যায়ে ন্যূনতম ২য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি	জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল-২০১৫

অন্যান্য যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা: স্নাতক পর্যায়ে পাঠদানকারী কোনো কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ/উপাধ্যক্ষ/অধ্যাপক/সহযোগী অধ্যাপক/সহকারী অধ্যাপকগণ উপরোল্লিখিত পদে আবেদন করতে পারবেন। আবেদনকারীর ন্যূনতম ১৫ বৎসরের ডিগ্রি কলেজ পর্যায়ে পাঠদানের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। আবেদনকারীর অবশ্যই ডিগ্রি কলেজের উপাধ্যক্ষ হিসেবে ৩ (তিন) বৎসর অথবা সহকারী অধ্যাপক হিসেবে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। অধ্যক্ষ পদে যে সকল প্রার্থীর বয়স ৫৫ (পঞ্চাশ) বৎসর অতিক্রম করেছে তারা স্থায়ী নিয়োগ লাভ করতে পারবেন না। তবে এমপিওভুক্ত শিক্ষকদের স্থায়ী নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সের শর্ত প্রযোজ্য হবে না।

শর্তাবলী: অগ্রহী প্রার্থীদের পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃত্তান্ত, ৪ কপি পি.পি.সাইজের রঙিন ছবি, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি ও অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ এবং যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা সম্বলিত ফেরত খাম ও সোনালী ব্যাংকের যে কোনো শাখা হতে ১০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডারসহ (অফেরতযোগ্য) আবেদনপত্র আগামী ৩০/০৮/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখের মধ্যে অধ্যক্ষ, ঢাকা মহানগর মহিলা কলেজ, লক্ষ্মীবাজার, সূত্রাপুর, ঢাকা-১১০০ বরাবর অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে ডাকযোগে/সরাসরি পৌছাতে হবে। চাকুরীরত প্রার্থীদেরকে অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। খামের উপর প্রার্থীর পদের নাম অবশ্যই উল্লেখ করতে হবে। অসম্পূর্ণ, ত্রুটিপূর্ণ বা বিলম্বে প্রাপ্ত আবেদনপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

বিঃদ্রঃ গত ২৪/১২/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখের বিজ্ঞপ্তির প্রেক্ষিতে যে সকল প্রার্থী উপরোক্ত সকল শর্ত পূরণ করে অধ্যক্ষ পদের জন্য আবেদন করেছেন; তাদের পুনরায় আবেদন করার প্রয়োজন নেই।

প্রফেসর তাহমিনা হক
অধ্যক্ষ (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
ঢাকা মহানগর মহিলা কলেজ

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/২৮/২০২২-২০২৩
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